



**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Funding and Legislation for the Office of Early Childhood
Submitted by Linda J. Kelly, President
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Monday, February 24, 2014**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am Linda J. Kelly, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (Hartford Foundation), the community foundation for the 29-town greater Hartford region. Our mission is to put philanthropy into action to create lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within the Greater Hartford region. For more than two decades, the Foundation has invested significantly in early childhood through its *Brighter Futures Initiative* and its support to the Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative. Our new strategic work builds upon this deep knowledge and experience to advance systemic solutions and new partnerships that address the root causes of the educational inequities facing the children in our region and ensure that these children, especially those most disadvantaged, are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.

The Hartford Foundation strongly supports the creation and funding in legislation of the Office of Early Childhood. A legislatively-created and fully funded statewide Office of Early Childhood, reporting directly to the Governor and bringing together early childhood services and programs from diverse state agencies, is essential for a high-quality, comprehensive, and coordinated system of early childhood services. As a community foundation, we value the conceptual vision embodied in the Office of Early Childhood that understands the child in the context of the family and community. Through our work, we know that an array of services and supports are required to increase opportunities for children. We need an Office of Early Childhood that can increase shared planning, coordination, and funding within and across the various systems responsible for learning, health and family support. In addition, through our experience as a funder, we acknowledge and appreciate the role that a statewide Office of Early Childhood can play in building bridges between local and regional early childhood experiences and strategies and state early childhood policy and practice.

We recognize the work of Myra Jones-Taylor and her team, who have worked tirelessly to listen directly to families and providers, philanthropy and other stakeholders across the state and begun to implement best practice research to inform the development of the new Office.

Legislation and funding is required to ensure a much needed transformation of Connecticut's current delivery of early childhood services from a fragmented array of programs and funding streams over many agencies to an integrated, cost-effective and coordinated system. **The Hartford Foundation urges the Appropriations Committee to approve adequate funding for the Office of Early Childhood.**

Thank you.

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